HOLCOMBE (Wm H.)

# HOW I BECAME

A

# HOMŒOPATH.

By WILLIAM H. HOLCOMBE, M. D.

OF NEW ORLEANS.

CHICAGO:

C. S. HALSEY, Homœopathic Pharmacy, 147 Clark Street.

1869.

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BY

# DR. HOLCOMBE.

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# How I Became a Homœopath.

I AM the son of a doctor. I was born and bred in a medical atmosphere. My father's office was the favorite place for my games when a little boy, and for my reading and study when a youth. The imposing shelves of portly volumes, the big jars of hideous specimens preserved in alcohol, the pervading odors of paregoric and lavender, the bloody-looking map of the "great sympathetic" on the wall, the long white skeleton grinning in the closet, and the mysterious box, containing the detached bones of a baby's skull, made a strong impression on my childish imagination. The old brown saddle-bags, with their incredible stores of vials and packages and pill-boxes excited my special admiration. Physicians were, in my opinion, the wisest and greatest and best of mankind. I saw the whole faculty through the venerated form and character of my good father. We differ as much from our own selves at different times, as we do from each other. I have lived to question and scout the old oracles — to abandon the "intensely respectable" path of routine — to discover in the old brown saddle-bags a Pandora's box of evils, and to see how much ignorance and mischief are sometimes concealed and consecrated by a medical diploma!

My father gave me his name, and I coveted his profession. In that happy period of boyhood, when our stick-horses are as real as grown men's hobbies, I played the little doctor,

and galloped from tree to tree and from post to post, visiting my imaginary patients. Before I was fifteen I had read Doctor Rush's half-literary, half-scientific, Introductory Lectures, and was eager to precipitate myself into the vortex of professional study. The child is father of the man. But I was wisely held to a long course of academic preparation. Still my penchant for medicine appeared in every thing. I applied my earliest Latin and Greek to analyzing the medical terms in old Hooper's Dictionary; I acquired the Natural Sciences, as mere stepping-stones to the Vital; I studied French, not for "Gil Blas" or "Corinne," but for Milne Edwards' Zoölogy; and in my botanical lessons, although there were ladies in the class, I had an eye rather to the properties of drugs than to the poetry of flowers.

My father was a Virginia gentleman of the old school, conservative in all his principles. The associates of his forty years' career will testify to the deep-rooted, thorough-going honesty of his nature, and to the chastity of his professional honor. He had been a private pupil of the celebrated Doctor Chapman, and he committed me in due time, with great pride and confidence, to the fostering care of the old University of Pennsylvania. So I followed my father's footsteps, walked the hospitals, frequented the dissecting room, took notes on the lectures, and graduated at that excellent institution. I returned home full of *l'esprit du corps*, devoted to my professors, proud of my diploma, and crammed full of principles which I was ready to put into practice, at the pecuniary and physical expense of my patrons.

I am not writing an autobiography. These personal details would be out of place, did they not furnish a kind of psychological key to something that follows. I am about to portray the struggles of an ardent and inquiring mind, whilst emancipating itself from the bondage of authority, and emerging into the light and liberty of truth. My experience is typical. Every man, physician or layman,

who ignores, misrepresents, ridicules and despises Homœopathy and Homœopathic physicians, as I did, does so from similar causes or motives. The traditions of the past, the teachings of masters, the example of friends, the power of custom and fashion, the opinions of society, weigh like an incubus upon us all, and take away not only the means but the will to investigate a new truth from an independent stand-point. These vast powers, which retard the progress of mankind, press upon us like the atmosphere, invisibly and unfelt. We are not conscious how blind and feeble, how ignorant and prejudiced and silly we are. There is folly which thinks itself wise, and ignorance which struts in the garb of knowledge. The rulers, the doctors, the chief priests and Pharisees of human thought and fashion, who hold the high places and the fat offices of the world, never recognize the genius of Galileos, and Harveys, and Jenners, and Fultons, and Hahnemanns, until their doctrines have triumphed by their own merits—until they have risen, like the sun, high into the heavens, dispersing the deep mists of error and prejudice which at first concealed them from sight.

I heard of Homœopathy, at Philadelphia, as all medical students hear of it. One professor, with a show of philosophic bearing, gave it a mock analysis, and dissipated it into thin air, as flippantly as an infidel of nineteen years discards the Christian religion. Another, whose private practice it had probably injured, denounced it bitterly, as an atrocious imposition upon the credulity of mankind. A third took a good-natured, jocose view of the whole affair, and laughed (all the students laughing in echo) at infinitesimals, as transcendental medicinal moonshine. They all agreed that Homœopathy was one of those evanescent forms of medical opinion, like Brunonism and Broussaisism, and Perkinism and Mesmerism, destined to have its day, and to vanish some morning, like an ignis fatuus, from the eyes of its deluded followers. They predicted its speedy death and final extinction. Of course I believed every word they

said. I was not expected or taught to seek for truth, but to receive what my masters imposed on me as truth. They dogmatized—I accepted. I entered in one page of my note book, "Ipecac — emetic;" in another, "Homœopathy — humbug."

So I passed out into the great world of action — bigoted, conceited, and ignorant of what was most worth knowing. The new dawn was breaking all around me, but I did not see it. The grand reform was springing up every where, but I did not know it. Scores of intelligent physicians were adopting the new practice; thousands of intelligent families were becoming its adherents; books were being printed, journals established, colleges founded; a great school of thought was growing up about me, as every genuine truth always grows, slowly but surely,—and of all this I had no living conception — it was all as unreal to me as the angel presences which are said to throng invisibly our earthly career. I was like some old mariner, who still hugged closely the barren shores of tradition, whilst others, armed with the magnetic needle, explored boldly the ocean of truth. I was like some young Greek disciple, just emerging from the Athenian portico, glorying in the wisdom of the ancient philosophies, and laughing to scorn the rambling Peters and Pauls, who preached in the market places a new doctrine, destined to silence the Pagan oracles and to revolutionize the world.

It was fortunate for me that I entered on my profession in partnership with my father, who was then enjoying a large practice in one of our western cities. It not only gave me fine opportunities for observation, at a period when most young physicians are waiting for business, but it threw me into daily and most instructive contact with a richly stored, sagacious, cautious, and practical mind. Experience with many physicians is merely a routine repetition of errors; with my father it was a steady advance toward the truth. His skepticism was continually chilling my enthu-

siasm. He was coldly empiric—disdaining speculations and distrusting all authorities. I thought we had twenty specifics for every disease; he knew we had seventy diseases without a single specific. I thought that doctors were ministering angels, bestowing health and blessings around them; he knew that they were blind men, striking in the dark at the disease or the patient—lucky if they killed the malady, and not the man. I thought that medicine was one of the fixed sciences, true in theory and certain in practice; he had discovered the wisdom, as well as the wit, of Voltaire's famous definition—"the art of amusing the patient whilst nature cures the disease!"

I had passed a year or two in active practice, learning to think under my father's supervision, (receiving thought from others and thinking for ourselves are very different things,) when I came suddenly into contact with what I regarded as the most gigantic humbug of the day—Homœopathy. It was in this manner: I was called out one cold winter night to a fine, plump little boy, suffering with the worst form of membranous croup. I gave him an emetic: he grew worse. I put him in a hot bath: he became hoarser and hoarser. I repeated the emetic and the bath, with no beneficial result. His difficulty of breathing became frightful. He then sank into a stupid state, with hot head and dilated pupils. I became alarmed. I saw that unless a speedy change could be induced, death was inevitable. I determined to bleed him, to relieve his congested brain, and then trust his fate to broken doses of calomel.

When I announced my sanguinary intention, the poor mother burst into a violent paroxysm of weeping, mingled with exclamations that her child should never be bled. I remonstrated; I explained the case—I entreated; but all to no purpose. She exclaimed wildly, clasping the little fellow to her heart, "The blood is the life—it shall not be taken away!" The husband took me into another room, and told me that his wife had once been insane, after the death of a

child, and was confined for months in a lunatic asylum. He said he dare not thwart her will in so important and delicate a matter—that the child must not be bled. He urged me to do something else—to do anything to save his child; but that I must not, should not bleed it. I explained to him, candidly, and with some display of professional dignity, that my opinion was worth more than his or his wife's; that there was no hope for his child but in bloodletting and calomel, and that I would not retain the responsibility of a case in which I was not permitted to dictate the treatment. The upshot of it was that I was dismissed not at all sorry that I had escaped the charge of a death which I deemed inevitable. The angel of Life must have clapped his hands for joy as I receded from the door.

The next day I expected to hear of the death of my little patient, but no such rumor reached my ear. The morning after I looked in the daily papers for a general invitation to his funeral, but no obituary was to be found. I was puzzled. What doctor, capable of saving life under such circumstances, could have been called in after I left? How I envied him his knowledge or his good luck! Imagine my amazement when I saw the child playing in his father's yard about the middle of the day! My curiosity was piqued, and became too strong for my professional hauteur. I determined to know who my skillful successor in the case was. I rang the bell, asked for the lady of the house, and with some little embarrassment made my inquiries. I was informed that a Homœopathic physician had been summoned; that he put a towel, wrung out of cold water, around the child's neck, and some little sugar pellets on his tongue. The pellets were repeated every fifteen minutes until the breathing became easy, the cough loose, and the patient roused up, from which time the convalescence was rapid.

A sensible mechanic who discovered that another mechanic executed some piece of work more rapidly, perfectly, dura-

bly and scientifically than himself, would be anxious to see how the new prineiples had been put into practice. In this case one would suppose that I said to myself, "This is very remarkable. I will see this new doctor; I will learn what he gave this child, and why he gave it. We will at least amieably exehange ideas: I may learn something useful to myself and others." That would have been common sense, but it would not have been Allopathie sense. That is what any sane man, who really enjoyed perfect freedom of thought and aetion, would have done; but I was bound hand and foot by the invisible but powerful trammels of edueation, prejudice, interest, fashion and habit. I derided the treatment as the climax of folly, and had the effrontery to claim that the ehild was eured by *my* remedies, whieh began to act after I left. The lady dissented from this opinion, and was evidently a convert to Homœopathy. My suspicion that the new system was a disgraceful imposture, now became a conviction, and not long after I refused to be introduced to the worthy gentleman who had saved my patient.

This Doctor Bianchini, who incurred my juvenile eontempt, was a respectable graduate of the University of Genoa, venerable for his age and his experience. Seventeen years afterwards I met him under more agreeable circumstances. I had learned his seeret of euring croup, and had employed it in hundreds of cases without a single failure. Of eourse we saw each other in a different and better light, and we laughed together at my harmless Allopathic pomposity. Our meeting reminded me of the two Welshmen who were traveling at day-break on one of the wild mountains of their country. When they first descried each other their figures loomed up so vastly and grotesquely through the sea of vapor, that eaeh exelaimed to himself, "What a monster approaches!" As they came nearer together each diseovered that the other bore the human shape, although strangely distorted by the dim mists of the morning. When they got faee to faee, behold, they were brothers! Just

such mists and vapors are all the creeds, and institutions, and conventionalities that separate man from man!

On reviewing the state of my mind at that period, and asking myself wonderingly why such a striking Homœopathic cure should have made no impression whatever on my thinking faculties, I remember that I was laboring under two great delusions respecting Homœopathy, which prevented it from obtaining the least foothold on my faith. I was bitter because I was ignorant, as some animals are said to be fiercest in the dark.

In the first place, I regarded Homœopathy as a doctrinal monstrosity and its practitioners as uneducated impostors. True, I had never read a single book or journal of the new school. I had never conversed with one of its physicians. I knew positively nothing about the whole matter, as is the case to-day with nine-tenths of the Allopathic physicians in the United States; my ignorance was the cause and measure of my intolerance. The "London Lancet," the mighty Hector of the orthodox hosts, was my oracle. I took every thing at second-hand—I saw every thing, like the Welshmen, through a rolling sea of vapor.

I needed some judicious, intelligent friend to show me what I now see so clearly—that Homœopathy is the crowning piece, the cap-stone of medical science; that it begins only where Allopathy ends. It is a grand philosophic reform in the highest and last-studied department of medicine—the application of remedies to the cure of disease. The entire course of scientific instruction necessary to the accomplished physician is the basis from which the true Homœopath must work upward and onward in his noble mission. Hahnemann stood head and shoulders above the crowd of his detractors. Jean Paul Richter calls him "that rare double-head of genius and learning," and so he was. The Germans who planted the new system on this continent—Hering, Wesselhœft, Gram, Haynel, Pulte, and others—were in every instance gentlemen of extensive and

varied erudition. Their first American disciples—the apostles of the school in our different cities—were in most cases men of superior mental endowments, and of thorough classical and scientific culture. In New York city, for example, Gray, Wilson, Channing, Hull, Curtis, Bayard, and others of the early Homœopaths, were men who would have added lustre to any of the medical or social circles in London or Paris.

In the second place, I was precluded from feeling the least interest in the social or scientific status of Homœopathy by a foregone conclusion, that infinitesimal doses were nothing at all—attenuated far beyond the possibility of any material power, and that Homœopathy was therefore a perfect humbug. True, I had never tried them, nor would I credit the evidence of those who had. Unless I could be satisfactorily convinced of the *why* and the *how* and the *wherefore* of the phenomena, I determined to deny the existence of the phenomena themselves. This false and vicious mode of reasoning is almost universal. Nevertheless, all genuine philosophers, from Bacon and John Hunter to Bartlett and Hugh Miller, tell us that no *a priori* reasonings or considerations can establish either the truth or falsity of alleged facts. Experiment only can fairly verify or confute. John Hunter used to say to his class, "Don't think, but try!" yet, in relation to Homœopathy, people think, think, —instead of trying.

It is very convenient, as every one knows, to have some body else to try for us, to think for us, to cook for us. Well, I and all other orthodox physicians had been relieved of the duty of examining Homœopathy by M. Andral, one of the greatest medical men in France, who experimented with it for a long time in a Parisian hospital. He tried it on fifty-four patients, and published the treatment and the results in a medical journal, which were of course republished in all the other journals in the world. Andral, in the name of Allopathy, gave our poor young Homœopathy what he

called a fair trial, and pronounced very decidedly against it. I heard of it; every Allopathic doctor heard of it. Andral laid Homœopathy on the shelf: we all agreed that it should stay on the shelf. As there are some old Rip Van Winkles who still believe in the force and justice of Andral's experiments, knowing nothing of them but Andral's name, I will relate a few striking facts about the famous trial, which I gathered from the British Journal of Homœopathy, where the whole matter is thoroughly sifted.

The trial was made over thirty years ago, when Homœopathy was in its infancy—before the hypothetical value of many of its remedies had been verified by experience, and when its treasury was not half so rich in great medicines as at present.

The result of nineteen of the fifty-four cases experimented on is not reported at all. Was it too favorable to Homœopathy for publication?

Three-fourths of the cases treated were of a serious chronic and organic character; such as consumption, gout, hypertrophy of the heart, amenorrhœa, chronic gastritis, bronchitis, etc., diseases requiring a long and varied course of treatment, and very frequently not curable by any medication whatever.

Will it be credited, that but a single dose of a Homœopathic medicine (all high dilutions) was given to each of these cases, and that when the disease was not cured in a few days, it was handed over to Allopathy, and a report entered unfavorable to the new system?

*In twenty-five out of the thirty-five cases reported the remedies were not at all Homœopathic to the diseases.* What sensible layman, practicing from his little "Domestic Guide," would not know better than to give *aconite* for intermittent fever, *arnica* for consumption, *hyosciamus* for pleurisy, *chamomilla* for diarrhœa without pain, *belladonna* for bronchitis, *opium* for uterine diseases, etc.? Yet these are the prescriptions made at random by the illustrious Andral, who acknow-

ledged himself unable to read German, the only language in which at that time a book existed which could have taught him how to use the above named drugs Homœopathically. Of the ten cases in which a tolerably Homœopathic remedy was chosen, seven are reported as better the next day.

Andral's experimentation was simply a farce, disgraceful to himself and his school, and one which looks like a trick of the trade, expressly gotten up to precipitate a verdict against Homœopathy, and silence in future the questionings of the medical mind on the subject. Of all this, however, I suspected nothing, and I went on practicing one system and abusing the other with an easy conscience. But I was destined, under Providence, for better things than to play always the part of the blind horse in a tread-mill.

In 1849 we were visited by that dreadful scourge, the Asiatic cholera. It loomed up like a black cloud in the East, and moved westward with frightful rapidity, spreading sorrow and death in its mighty shadow. We prepared for its visitation by earnest thought and study. We mastered the opinions and practice of those who had witnessed the previous epidemics. They were so discordant and unsatisfactory that we faced the great enemy with fearful misgivings of our power to contend with him successfully. In our poor, blind, Allopathic superstition, that diseases are to be cured by their opposites, we exclaimed, "What powerful astringents must be needed for such profuse evacuations!—what sedatives for such vomitings!—what antispasmodics for such cramps!—what opiates for such horrible pains!—what heat-producing remedies for such deathly coldness!—what rapid stimulants for such fearful prostration!—what mighty specifics for such fatal congestions!" Oh, the bewildering chaos of irrational theories and disgusting polypharmacy!

So we went to work with all the resources at our command. If there was no bile secreted, it was not for the

want of calomel; if the sufferings of the poor patients were not mitigated, it was not for want of opiates; if they sank into fatal prostration, it was because brandy and capsicum and ether, and a hundred other stimulants, could not rally them; if they became cold as death, it was because mustard plasters and blisters, and frictions and burning liniments, and steam baths and hot bricks, and bottles and boiled corn, and all the appliances for creating artificial heat from without, were no substitute for the animal heat, which was no longer generated within. The theories and practices in cholera, as innumerable as they are contradictory, reveal in the strongest light the fallacies, the absurdities, the *non sequiturs*, the monstrosities of Allopathic philosophy. Future ages of reason and truth will unquestionably class them all with the old negro's prescription for chronic diarrhœa—"Alum and rosin, sir: de alum to fotch de parts togedder, and de rosin to sodder 'em!"

Very many cases of diarrhœa, which would no doubt have become cholera, were cured by repose, diet, and simple mixtures, of which camphor was generally an ingredient. But when cholera was fully developed—when there was vomiting and rice-water discharges, and cramps and cold skin, and cold tongue and sinking pulse—our success, honestly reported, was poor indeed. Death dogged our footsteps wherever we went; nor were we more unfortunate than our fellow physicians. Amazing paradox,—I obtained quite a reputation for curing cholera! Boasted specifics came crowding upon us from the journals and papers, and by rumor and tradition. All were tried, and all failed. Our hearts sank within us, and amid the wailings of bereaved friends, and in the streets, black with funeral processions, we deplored in anguish the imbecility of our art. My honest old father exclaimed to me one day in his office, "My son, we had as well give our patients ice-water as any drug in the Materia Medica. The cases which get well would have recovered without treatment."

This candid, truthful outburst of an experienced and strong-minded Allopathic physician is as true to-day as it was sixteen years ago, when it was made. The Allopaths have done nothing for the human race in the amelioration of this terrible plague—positively nothing. They are ready to deny it—to boast over again of calomel and laudanum, to declare the cholera to be as curable as toothache or neuralgia (which, by the way, they so seldom cure), and to vaunt their "philosophical" theories and "rational" practice in the very face of death and panic and depopulation. Some few sturdy, honest thinkers amongst them will occasionally tell the truth. Let the young Esculapian who carries a little apothecary's shop in his saddle-bags, and thinks himself ready to cure every case of cholera, read the following extract from Aitken's "Science and Practice of Medicine," (*Allopath*) page 2441, and let it sink deep into his soul, for sooner or later he will see and feel its truth:

"There are few diseases for the cure of which so many different remedies and modes of treatment have been employed as in cholera, and, unfortunately, without our discovering any antidote to the poison. In Moscow it is said that twenty different modes of treatment were practiced at different hospitals, and that the proportionate number of deaths was the same in all. In the same city, also, it is supposed that the mortality was not greater among those destitute of medical aid than among those that had every care and attention shown them. It may be fairly inferred, therefore, that in the severer forms of this disease the action of this poison is so potent as to render the constitution insensible to the influence of our most powerful remedial agents."

This palpable failure of Allopathy (call it "regular, rational, scientific medicine," if you choose) in a disease in which the symptoms are so striking and the indications of treatment so plain, set me to thinking, and I began to ask myself if we had not over-estimated its real value and

importance in all other diseases. I gradually passed into a skeptical phasis of mind. I became quite disgusted with the practice of my profession. I began to think with Bichat and Rostan, that the Materia Medica was a strange medley of inexact ideas, puerile observations, and illusory methods. I admired the remark of the dying Dumoulin, that he left the two greatest physicians behind him—*diet* and *water;* and I echoed in my private cogitations the exclamation of Frappart: "Medicine, poor science!—doctors, poor philosophers!—patients, poor victims!"

I was roused from this state of disgust, incredulity and apathy in the fall of 1849, by floating rumors of the successful treatment of cholera, at Cincinnati, by Homœopathy. First one friend, and then another, echoed these marvelous stories, professing to believe them. A letter from Rev. B. F. Barrett, of Cincinnati, was published in the papers, well calculated to excite attention and inquiry. Mr. Barrett (afterwards a very kind friend) was personally known to me as a gentleman of distinguished worth and intelligence, and of unquestionable integrity. I knew perfectly well that if human testimony is worth any thing at all, Mr. Barrett's testimony was to be believed.

Mr. Barrett's statement was in substance this: he had one hundred and four families under his pastoral charge. Of these, eighty-six families, numbering four hundred and seventy-six individuals, used and exclusively relied upon the Homœopathic treatment; seventeen families, numbering one hundred and four individuals, employed the old system. Amongst the former there were one hundred and sixty cases of cholera and *one* death; amongst the latter thirty cases and *five* deaths. This amazing difference between the two methods was supported by the assertion, that twenty cases of cholera occurred in the iron foundry of Mr. James Root, a respectable member of his congregation, all of which were Homœopathically treated, without a single death.

About the same time Doctors Pulte and Ehrmann, of

Cincinnati, published statistics of their treatment for three months. They managed eleven hundred and sixteen cases of cholera, of which five hundred and thirty-eight cases were of the severe type; from sixty to seventy collapsed, with thirty-five deaths. They gave the names, dates and addresses of all their patients, so that the facts could be verified, and challenged investigation and comparison.

Of course I knew that clergymen and aristocratic ladies had a very great penchant for Homœopathy, and other new things, and that all the quacks and impostors in the world, as well as the "regulars," appeal to statistics to support their pretensions. Still, making all due allowance for the extravagance of enthusiasm, credulity, imagination and predilection, and also for errors in diagnosis and inaccuracies of detail, there was enough residuum of solid truth in all this to bring me silently to the conclusion — "There's *something* in Homœopathy, and it deserves investigation."

When I made up my mind to give Homœopathy a fair trial, I did it in the right manner. I did not read Professor Simpson's big book against it, nor Professor Hooker's little book against it, nor yet Professor Holmes' funny prose and poetry against it, and then tell my friends that I had studied Homœopathy, and found nothing in it;— that is one very common Allopathic way of studying Homœopathy from the Allopathic stand-point; nor did I get Hahnemann's works, and read them with my old pathological spectacles, and decide that the *why* and the *how* and the *wherefore* of infinitesimals were all incomprehensible, and that Homœopathy was a delusion;—that's another Allopathic way of studying Homœopathy, almost as absurd as the first. No; I believed with Hugh Miller, that scientific questions can only be determined *experimentally*, never by *a priori* cogitations. I got a little pocket cholera case, containing six little vials of pellets and a printed chart of directions. I determined to forget all that I knew for the time being, and to obey orders under the new *régime*, with the unquestioning docility of a

little child. I awaited my next patient like a hunter watching for a duck.

I was called up in the middle of the night, to see a poor fellow said to be dying of cholera on a flatboat which had just landed. I found him collapsed; he was cold and blue, with frequent rice-water discharges, and horribly cramped. His voice was husky, pulse feeble and fluttering; he was tossing about continually, begging his comrades to rub his limbs. I immediately wrote a prescription for pills of calomel, morphine and capsicum, and dispatched a messenger to a drug store. This was to be my reserve corps—ready for use if the infinitesimals failed. I consulted the printed direction: they ordered *cuprum* when the cramps seemed to be the prominent symptom. I dissolved some pellets in a tumbler of water, and gave a teaspoonful every five minutes. I administered the simple remedy, apparently nothing, with incredulity and some trepidation. "I have no right," said I to myself, "to trifle with this man's life. If he is not better when the pills come, I will give them as rapidly as possible."

Oh! for a strong word at that moment from James John Garth Wilkinson, of London, or a page of his luminous writings, which coruscates athwart the darkness of his age like the fire of heaven—Wilkinson, whose renown is such that Emerson declares him to be the greatest man he saw in Europe!—(mark you—a Homœopathic doctor!)—"the Bacon of the nineteenth century," whose mind has "a very Atlantic roll of thought!" How I could have been encouraged and strengthened by such a paragraph as this from his "War, Cholera, and the Ministry of Health."

"The dimensions of power are not weighed by scales, or told off on graduated bottles, but reckoned by deeds done. When I am called to an inflammation, I know that *aconite* and *belladonna* in billionths of a drop are a vast healing power, because I have cured, and daily do cure, formidable inflammations in their outset by these means. I look upon

my little bottles as giants — as words that shake great diseases to their marrows, and into their ashes, and rid the whole man of a foe life-size. Away, then, with the bigness based on quantity, and which sits like a vulgar bully in the medical shops. Great cures determine the only greatness which sick men or their guardians can recognize in medicine."

The messenger had gone for the pills a good way up town. He had been obliged to ring a long while before he could rouse the sleeping apothecary, and it was quite three-quarters of an hour before he rushed on the boat with the precious Allopathic parcel. My patient had become quiet; his cramps had disappeared, and he was thanking me in his hoarse whisper for having relieved him of such atrocious pains. The Allopathic parcel was laid on the shelf. I consulted my printed directions again. *Veratrum* was said to be specific against the rice-water discharges and cold sweats, which still continued. I dissolved a few pellets of *veratrum*, and ordered a teaspoonful every ten or fifteen minutes, unless the patient was asleep. Before I left the boat, however, an Allopathic qualm came over me, sharp as a stitch in the side, and I left orders that if the man got any worse, the pills must be given every half hour till relieved, and I might have added—or dead.

I retired to my couch, but not to sleep; like Macbeth, I had murdered sleep — at least for one night. The spirit of Allopathy, terrible as a night-mare, came down fiercely upon me, and would not let me rest. What right had I to dose that poor fellow with Hahnemann's medicinal moonshine, when his own faith, no doubt, was pinned to calomel and opium, and all the orthodox pills, potions, poultices and porridges! I had not told him that I was going to practice Homœopathy on him. His apparent relief was probably only a deceitful calm. Perhaps he was at that moment sinking beyond all hope, owing to my guilty trifling with human life. He was a drowning man, calling

for help, and I had reached him only a straw! I was overwhelmed with strange and miserable apprehensions. I longed for the morning like a sick man, for I *was* sick in conscience and at heart.

I left my bed of thorns at day-break, and hurried to the boat, trembling with fear lest I should find the subject of my rash experiment cold and dead. He was in a sweet sleep. The sweating and diarrhœa had disappeared, and a returning warmth had diffused itself over his skin. He was out of danger; and he made the most rapid convalescence that I had ever witnessed after cholera. I was delighted: a burden had been lifted from my heart—a cloud from my mind. I began to believe in Homœopathy. I felt like some old Jew who had witnessed the contest between Goliah and David. How amazed he must have been when the great giant, who could not be frightened by swords or bludgeons or brazen trumpets, fell before the shepherd boy, armed only with a little pebble from the brook!

I remembered my case of croup, which Doctor Bianchini had cured so quickly, and I felt like giving the new treatment a little more credit for the cure. Let not my reader imagine, however, that I went enthusiastically into the study and practice of Homœopathy, as I ought to have done. No, indeed!—it was two long years of doubting and blundering before I was willing to own myself a Homœopathist. We may be startled into admissions by brilliant evidence like the above, but we really divest ourselves very slowly of life-long prejudices and errors. I have cured many a man with infinitesimals, and found him as skeptical as ever. I myself witnessed the triumph of these preparations in scores—yes, hundreds of cases, before my mind advanced a step beyond its standing-point—"There is something in Homœopathy, and it deserves investigation."

My father, like the sensible man he was, did not sneer or scoff at my Homœopathic experiments: he recognized the partial truth of the principle—"*Similia similibus.*" He used

to say that he had too frequently cured vomiting with small doses of *ipecac*, and bilious diarrhœa with fractional doses of *calomel*, to question the fact, that a drug in minute quantities might relieve the very symptom which it produced in large ones. He came in one day from a bad (really hopeless) case of cholera, and proposed I should try my *cuprum* and *veratrum* on it. The poor fellow died, and quite a damper was thrown on my young enthusiasm. We expect everything—perfection, magic, miracle—from a new system. Allopathy may fail whenever it pleases—it has acquired the privilege by frequent exercise of it; but let Homœopathy fail, and all inquiry ceases, until something forces it on our attention again.

When I visited Cincinnati, soon after, I had interviews with Mr. Barrett, and also with Doctor N. C. Burnham, the first Homœopathic physician I ever conversed with, and obtained much surprising information about the Homœopathic treatment of cholera and other diseases. I supplied myself with books and medicines, and began the systematic study of the system. I confess I found it very difficult, and even repulsive, with the limited material at our command at that time. I discovered, however, what many Allopathic explorers fail to discern, that Homœopathy offers us the only medical theory which professes to be supported by fixed natural law, and that it requires thorough scientific training to understand it properly, or to prosecute it successfully. I wonder now at the slow reception—the lazy, frequently interrupted study—the apathy, the indifference of that period. I would sometimes practice Allopathically for weeks together, and only think of Homœopathy in obscure, difficult, obstinate, or incurable cases.

Singular injustice is perpetrated against Homœopathy every day by both physicians and people. The Allopathic incurables—the epileptics, the paralytics, the consumptives, the old gouty and rheumatic, and asthmatic and scrofulous, and dropsical and dyspeptic patients—come to the Homœ-

opathic doctor for prompt, brilliant and perfect cures. Failing to obtain these after a few days' or a few weeks' trial, they go away, and disseminate a distrust of the value of Homœopathic medication. All these cases are treated better in the new than the old way. They are more frequently cured — much more frequently relieved; they live longer, with less pain and more comfort. But these are not fair test cases of the power of Homœopathy. When Allopathy cleans its Augean hospitals of all such *opprobia* it will be time for us to show equal omnipotence. If a man wishes really to discover what Homœopathy can accomplish, let him try it in acute, sharply defined, uncomplicated diseases, such as cholera, croup, erysipelas, pneumonia, dysentery, hæmorrhages, neuralgia, and the various forms of inflammation and fever. Having settled its value in these simpler and better understood diseases, he can advance to its trial in the more complex, and he will never be so much disappointed as to be willing to relapse into the old cobweb theories and practices of the past.

The dysentery followed the cholera throughout the western country. I treated many cases Homœopathically, and with admirable results. I had occasion to try my new practice on myself in this painful disease. I persisted in the use of my infinitesimals, although I suffered severely; and my father, becoming impatient, brought me a delicious dose of calomel and opium, which he requested me to take. I declined doing so, on the ground that I ought to be as willing to experiment upon myself as upon others. I made a rapid recovery. I had not then become as zealous a believer as a distinguished legal friend of mine in Mississippi, who vowed that he expected and intended to live and to die under Homœopathy — to make an easy death and a decent corpse. I could not boast, either to myself or others, of the special superiority of Homœopathy over the old system in dysentery, because my father's Allopathic practice was quite as successful as mine. He gave very little medicine, and

dieted very strictly. I insisted, however, and I believe correctly, that the average duration and severity of the disease were less under the new than under the old system.

In 1850 I moved to Cincinnati, and entered on a wider and more stimulating field of thought and action. My professional activities were sharpened and brightened; and yet, strange to say, my interest in Homœopathy waned and almost expired. I had the books and medicines in my office, and occasionally prescribed according to the "*similia similibus;*" but my studies, my associates, my ambition, and my general practice were Allopathic. I kept aloof from Homœopathic physicians. I professed to believe that Homœopathy had some indefinable value, but had received too imperfect and obscure development as yet to be trusted at the bedside. I wrote my first medical essay for an Allopathic journal. When I reflect on this course of mine, I am not surprised that a family sometimes uses Homœopathy for a while, seems very much pleased with it, having every reason to be so, and then quietly glides back, under the influence of personal friendships or fashion, into the old, respectable, well-regulated dominions of calomel and Dover's powder.

Every man has a magnetic or spiritual sphere emanating from him, which tends to bring others into *rapport* with him, and so impose his opinions and views upon them. A society or institution, whether a church, a political party, or a scientific school, is a large sphere, the aggregation of the individual ones, which has a powerful magnetic quality, binding all the similar parts in strict cohesion, and repelling from it every thing dissimilar which would resist its bonds or question its authority. The majority of men are unthinking, and they are drawn and held, like little particles of iron about a magnetic centre, unconscious of their slavery, and fondly believing themselves capable of independent thought and action. The medical profession—a vast, learned, influential and "intensely respectable" body, insensibly exhales from itself a sphere of dignity, authority and power well

calculated to reduce its subordinates to a respectful submission.

This was the secret of my vacillation of opinion. My hopes, my aspirations, my friendships, my social position, were all associated with the old medical profession. I was again, as at Philadelphia, in the charmed atmosphere of colleges and journals, and hospitals and dispensaries, and medical authors and genial professors. I loved the books of the Old School; I admired its teachers, respected their learning, and coveted their good opinion. To array myself against what I so much honored and respected—to cut loose from these fashionable and comfortable moorings—to throw myself into the arms of those whom I had been absurdly taught to consider as less respectable, less scientific, less professional than myself and friends, was a task difficult to accomplish. The discovery and the acceptance of truth are alike painful. It is a continual warfare with one's self and the world: it is a fight in which defeat is moral death, and in which victory brings no ovation. My inglorious repose under the shadow of the Allopathic temple was suddenly broken by the iron hand of a better destiny.

In the spring of 1851 I visited an uncle in the extreme South. I glided along on the swelling bosom of the great Mississippi, whose throb was communicated through countless tributaries to an area of European dimensions. I enjoyed the sunny air, the delicious perfumes, and the boundless luxuriance of that rich climate, which blends the charms and beauties of the temperate zone with those of the tropics. I threaded the dingy mazes of the Red river far upward toward its source, and hunted wolves and wild cats in the forests of Texas. I burst the thrall of books and parties and schools, and in the vast solitudes of nature I inspired a new air, a new spirit, a new liberty.

I was returning to Cincinnati, refreshed and invigorated by my excursion, when the cholera broke out among the German immigrants, who crowded the lower deck of the

steamboat on which I had taken passage. The clerk of the boat, a personal friend, came to me and told me that I was the only physician on board, and requested my assistance for these poor people. I was surveying the medical stores in the large brass-bound mahogany chest which our river boats always keep, when the clerk remarked to me, "Ah, doctor, I have got a better medicine chest than that, from which I select remedies for such passengers as have good sense enough to prefer Homœopathy to Allopathy." With that he brought out a nice little Homœopathic box, and I determined at once to make a grand Homœopathic experiment on our Teutonic travelers. I committed the same ethical impropriety which saved the life of my flatboatman; but I made the fact, that I had no confidence in Allopathy for cholera, and the wishes of the officers of the boat, my excuse.

We put every new case on *tincture of camphor*, one drop every five minutes—enjoining absolute rest and strict diet. The fully formed cases were treated with *cuprum*, *veratrum* and *arsenic*, according to the symptoms. Many cases of cholerina were immediately arrested. Thirteen passed into fully developed cholera, of which two were collapsed. There was not a single death. This outburst may have been of milder type than usual, for similar epidemics have occurred on plantations, many cases with inconsiderable mortality. I did not think of that or know it at the time; and my success made a powerful impression on my mind in favor of Homœopathy. Two Old-School physicians came on board at Memphis, and were all suavity, examining my cases with great interest, until they learned that I was practicing Homœopathy on them, when they turned up their noses and withdrew to a distance quite as agreeable to me as to themselves.

The discovery of the planet Le Verrier, by the great French astronomer, is often adduced as one of the most splendid triumphs of human genius. No eye had ever seen

the distant globe. Le Verrier conceived the idea that a certain perturbation in the movements of the planets could be accounted for only on the supposition of the existence of another planet, of certain dimensions, occupying a certain orbit, at a certain distance beyond all the others. Powerful instruments were brought to bear on the sidereal spaces, and the new orb, first discovered by the mind, was revealed to the eye. The only fact in history which matches it in grandeur, and excels it in utility, is the prediction by Hahnemann, that *camphor*, *cuprum* and *veratrum* would be found the best remedies for cholera. No European physician had ever seen the Asiatic plague. No experiments had been made—no theories tested. Hahnemann, without ever seeing a case or prescribing for a patient, being guided by the eternal therapeutic law, which he had discovered, "*Similia similibus curantur*," predicts the successful treatment as confidently as he would have directed the proper course of a vessel by the help of the magnetic needle.

I returned to the study of Homœopathy with redoubled zeal. I not only read Hahnemann, but everything I could get hold of bearing on the subject, for and against. I can especially recommend to the beginner the back numbers of the British Journal of Homœopathy, a splendid monument of Homœopathic learning and talent, still flourishing, in its twenty-fifth volume. I also proved medicines on myself—*aconite*, *nux vomica*, *digitalis*, *platina*, *podophyllin*, *bromine*, *natrum muriaticum*, and *eryngium aquaticum*, and became convinced experimentally of the truth of those Homœopathic teachings about the action of drugs, which are revolutionizing the Materia Medica. I sought the acquaintance of Homœopathic physicians, and found Doctors Pulte, Ehrmann, Price, Parks, Gatchell, Bigler, and others, intelligent and cultivated gentlemen—the equals, morally, intellectually and socially, of their bigoted and ill-informed traducers. I began also to practice Homœopathically, with more precision and success than before. Indeed, I was bursting my

chrysalis shell, and getting ready to soar into the golden auras of a better philosophy.

The last case I treated out and out Allopathically was that of a dear friend, a promising young lawyer. He charged me especially not to try my little pills on him; for my use of Homœopathy was getting to be pretty generally known So I treated his case, typhoid fever, with as much Allopathic skill as I could display. He became worse and worse. I called in the distinguished Doctor Daniel Drake in consultation, and Professor John Bell, of Philadelphia, then filling a chair in the Ohio Medical College, was added to the list of medical advisers. My poor friend lived six or seven weeks—his constitution struggling, like a gallant ship in a storm, not only against his disease, but against the remedies devised by his well-meaning doctors for his restoration. Modesty of course demanded that a young man like myself should stand silent and acquiescent in the presence of such shining lights of the medical profession. But the spirit of free criticism had been awakened in my brain, and I watched the ever-varying prescriptions they made, and the shadowy theories upon which they were based, with mingled feelings of surprise, incredulity and pity. I mean no disrespect to these eminent and excellent gentlemen, both of whom treated me with the most genial civility, and paid me social visits after my formal separation from the Old-School profession; but having seen Allopathy practiced in a long and painful case, in the best manner and spirit, by its best representatives, I determined to abjure it, *as a system*, forever.

This determination was arrived at by the contrast between the two systems, which I was now enabled to make by my previous study and practice of Homœopathy. A few years earlier I would have received the dicta of Doctors Drake and Bell as words of oracular wisdom—I would have taken notes of the principles and practice involved in the case, and would have thought I had gained some invaluable knowledge from these consultations. What jargon to me

was all their learned phrases about correcting secretions, equalizing the circulation, allaying irritation, obviating congestion, determining to the cuticle, etc., and all their various means and measures for doing these things, when I knew that *bryonia* and *rhus*, in very small doses, prevented the development of the typhoid condition, for the very simple reason that they produced it in large ones — every drug having opposite poles of action, one represented by large doses, and the other by small! How useless, and even injurious, were their opium and hyosciamus and lupulin, etc., checking secretion, benumbing sensibility, obscuring the case, when a few pellets of *coffea* would have produced sleep or quieted irritability! And then, how much better infinitesimal *arsenic* or *mercurius* would have checked that obstinate diarrhœa than all the chalk mixtures and astringents in the Materia Medica! And so of every feature in the case. The fact is, there are many exceedingly valuable empirical preparations in Allopathy, for this, that, and the other morbid state or symptoms; but the general mode of philosophizing is false, vicious and irrational, and the resulting practice frequently destructive: therefore, although I might continue to give quinine for intermittents, bismuth for gastralgia, etc., still, as I discarded all the Allopathic theories, and nine-tenths of their practice, having a better system, thoroughly practical, safe, prompt, pleasant and efficacious, I could no longer call myself, or consent to be called, an Allopathic physician.

Now arose a delicate and difficult question. If you believe that Homœopathy is merely a reform in the highest sphere of medical science—that all scientific culture is preliminary, necessary, and adjuvant to it—if you intend retaining many of the best Old-School empirical prescriptions, because your new system, although magnificent as far as it goes, is still imperfect, — why do you cut yourself off from your old friends and associates, and assist in founding a new and antagonistic School of Medicine, instead of infusing the

spirit of your reform into the old one? Ah! but could I have done this noble work? Could I have taught the power of infinitesimals, and have reported my Homœopathic cures in the established journals of medicine? Of course not. That failing, could I have written books on Homœopathy, contributed articles to Homœopathic journals, consulted with Homœopathic physicians, and have remained in good standing and loving fellowship with the intolerant members of the Medico-Chirurgical Society? Of course not. My dignity, self-respect, candor, honesty, and spirit of independence, all demanded that I should send in my resignation to that Society, as to a party of gentlemen to whom my opinions and practice had become obnoxious.

I have now been a Homœopath for fifteen years. I have practiced it in all our Southern diseases for thirteen years. Having studied both sincerely, I can contrast the two systems correctly. In all acute diseases, from the worst of them, cholera and yellow fever, to the ear-ache or a cold in the head, Homœopathy cures more frequently, promptly and perfectly. In the chronic and organic diseases it sometimes achieves brilliant results; but in some obscure, complicated or incurable cases, we have still occasionally to borrow the empirical crutches of Allopathy, for which we are sincerely grateful. Having been true to myself and my conscience, and, as I firmly believe, to science and humanity, I have so long ignored the scoffs, the taunts, the base insinuations of some of my old confrères, that I have almost forgotten they ever existed. Homœopathy enjoys a steady, beautiful, perpetual growth, although the London Lancet still vomits its falsehood and slander, like the great flood of water which the dragon ejected after the woman in the Apocalypse.

Homœopathy is not becoming more Allopathic, as some suppose, because the new converts who are crowding into our School retain more or less of their old opinions and practice. The genuine Hahnemannian spirit—the spirit of *similia* in theory and infinitesimals in practice—was never

more vital or progressive. It is the hope of our medical future—the guiding star of investigation —the pivot of truth.

As to our professional assailants — the Simpsons, the Hookers and Holmeses of the day, and those who echo their oft-refuted statements, as they understand Homœopathy about as well as the prosy old Dane did the character of Hamlet—we toss them the line of the poet—

"And you, oh. Polonius ! you vex me but slightly !"

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